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THE MORNING NEWS

Seasons Greetings

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Major blizzard in US Midwest threatens holiday travel

CHICAGO (AFP) - A massive and deadly winter snowstorm blanketed the US Midwest yesterday, grounding hundreds of planes and making roads and highways impassable as travelers gear up for the Christmas holiday.

The region's first big storm of the season dumped more than a foot (30 centimeters) of snow in parts of Wisconsin, Iowa and Minnesota as the powerful system moved slowly eastward.

Winds with gusts as high as 50 miles (80 kilometers) per hour felled trees and power lines, leaving tens of thousands

of homes in the dark and cold.

Snow drifts reached as high as four feet in some places and visibility was down to near zero, the National Weather Service reported.

At least one person was killed in a 25-vehicle pileup after conditions got so bad on a major Iowa highway that people couldn't see the cars and big trucks that had slowed down or stopped ahead of them.

Roads across the state were blocked by jack-knifed trucks and stalled cars as officials pleaded with people to stay home.

Continued on page 4

Counselor for Dutch Kingdom External Affairs visiting Aruba

Just recently mr. Dr. Van Woudenberg, counselor for Dutch Kingdom Affairs was in Aruba for a courtesy visit and to introduce himself. Van Woudenberg was recently nominated and his visit was a first to Aruba. Aruba's Department of External Affairs, who acted as host to the Dutch dignitary, had prepared an extensive program for the brief visit.

Meeting with the Department of External Relations:

One important aspect of the meeting with Van Woudenberg was to be able to sit down with our own local Department of External Affairs. Different important topics were discussed with an exchange of ideas particularly with respect to training regarding internal processes. Local Director Drs. A. Lee and his staff emphasized the importance of establishing lines of communications between the two departments so as to complement each other and comply with a strategic management regarding external relations in the Kingdom.

Another topic of importance was Aruba's membership in International organizations and on preparing reports.

Meeting with other organizations:

The program included a visit to the interim governor of

Aruba, Mrs. A. Tromp-Yarzagaray which was followed by meetings with, among others, the Secretary of the Council of Ministers, N. Hoeverst, Director of VDA, J. Nicolas, Director of VNO in Aruba, G. Lieuw and Director of the Central Bank, Mrs. M. Gonzalez.

Mr. Van Woudenberg also visited an exposition of the Bo Barrio Project and received an explanation from Raffy Kock about the infrastructure plans of the government.

In conclusion of his visit, he had an encounter with the Director of MOT, D. van den Ham and an introduction of the new director, Mr. L. Peek. Here they discussed, among others, the FATF report.



Ms. O. Croes with Mr. Dr. Van Woudenberg

Aruba's Department of External Affairs was extremely pleased with the visit of Mr. Van Woudenberg and expects to see concrete results forthcoming shortly.

Airport Rotunda opens today!

The long-awaited improvements to the highway feeding the Reina Beatrix International Airport will be nearly completed today, December 21, with the opening of Aruba's first "Spiral Rotunda."

This new rotunda is Aruba's first three-lane roundabout and traffic feeding into the circle should take the lane that leads to their exit. Crossing lanes once on the traffic circle is strictly forbidden.

Police and DOW ask motorists to be cautious and traverse it slowly to avoid accidents. Police also ask that drivers be sure to feed in the right lane when they approach it and not try changing lanes if they are not in the correct lane, but would do better to go around again.

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Santa Rosa to introduce Jersey cattle in 2013

Will probe possibility of fresh milk and meat locally



ORANJESTAD - Santa Rosa, the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, will introduce Jersey cattle in the year 2013. The department will import a bull and three cows to investigate the possibility of raising cattle on Aruba. Jersey cattle are a small breed of dairy cattle originally bred in the Channel Island of Jersey.

The Jersey cow is quite small, ranging around only 400-500 kilograms (880-1,100 lb). The main factor contributing to the popularity of the breed has been their greater economy of production, due to:

- The ability to carry a larger number of effective milking cows per unit area due to lower body weight, hence lower maintenance requirements, and superior grazing ability.

- Calving ease and a

relatively lower rate of dystopia, leading to their popularity in crossbreeding with other dairy and even beef breeds to reduce calving related injuries.

- High fertility
- High butterfat conditions, 4.84% butterfat and 3.95% protein, and the ability to thrive on locally produced food. Bulls are also small, ranging from 540 to 820 kg (1200 to 1800 pounds), and are notoriously aggressive.

Jersey cattle are more tolerant of heat than the larger breeds. It produces more pounds of milk per pound of body weight than any other breed, an average of 20 liter per day, depending on its nutrition. Most Jerseys produce far in excess of 13 times their body-weight in milk each lactation.

They come in all shades of brown, from light tan to almost black. They are calm and docile animals, but tend to be a bit more nervous than other dairy cow breeds. Jersey cattle are the second best dairy producers after Frisian cows.

Santa Rosa is also re-introducing the French Alpine goat.

Alpine is a breed of domestic goat known for its very good milking ability. They are multi-colored and have no set markings.

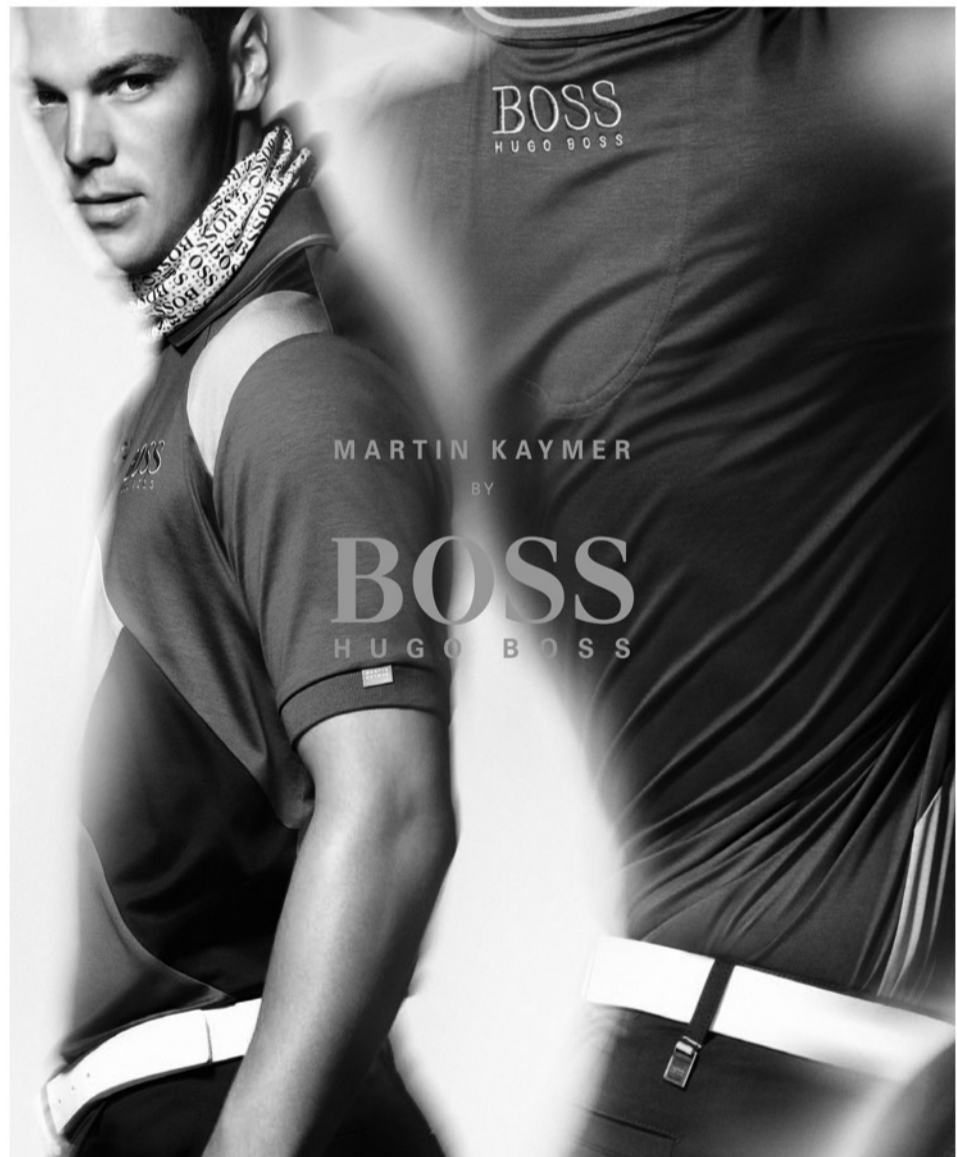
Alpine goats are heavy milkers; the milk can be made into butter, cheese, ice cream or any other dairy product that cow's milk can produce.

The Alpine is smaller than the Anglo Nubian but bigger

than the Toggenburg, which makes it doubly beneficial, because it is big enough to breed for meat and it produces milk.

Santa Rosa will also import other cattle breeds, like Dorper sheep and Toggenburg and

Anglo Nubian goats. Santa Rosa will also import, by high demand, a few Boer Goat, a fast growing goat with excellent carcass qualities, making it one of the most popular breeds of meat goat in the world.



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Fine foods net thousands at Paris charity auction

PARIS (AFP) - Truffles, oysters, an aged side of beef or a three-star dinner by a top French chef: a mouthwatering line-up of festive delicacies were the star lots of an offbeat charity auction in Paris.

Dubbed "Fine Food", and

held for the second year running by the auctioneer Artcurial for the benefit of the French Red Cross, the sale Tuesday night raised 57,015 euros (\$75,714) for the charity's Paris soup kitchens and aid missions.

A 58-month-old Spanish

bellota ham, billed as a Rolls-Royce for meat lovers, fetched the highest amount at the pre-Christmas sale, reaching 2,600 euros.

A three-star meal for two rustled up by chef Michel Troigros was snapped up for 450 euros, one of a string of similar lots put up by chefs from Alain Ducasse to Rene Redzepi of Copenhagen's Noma, rated the world's best table.

Many of France's top fine food suppliers took part, like the star French butcher Yves-Marie Le Bourdonnec who offered a side of Wagyu beef, aged for 100 days, and described by one admiring punter as "a work of art."

Two fresh foie gras went for 160 euros, a lot of aged comte and gruyere cheese fetched 300 euros, while 250 grammes of Perigord black truffles reached 450 euros and half a wild salmon 1,250 euros.

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Major blizzard in US Midwest . . .

Continued from page 1

A regional energy company said the storm had cut power to more than 40,000 households and businesses in Iowa, where nearly a foot of snow had fallen in the capital, Des Moines.

The storm had also dumped more than two feet of snow in parts of the western US, including Washington state and Wyoming on Wednesday.

Airlines canceled more than 400 flights and passengers also encountered delays of up to four hours at Chicago's bustling O'Hare airport, one of the busiest in the world.

Rain made Chicago's runways and roads slick yesterday morning and heavy snow fell around 3:00 pm -- just in time to snarl the evening commute.

Another 124 flights were cancelled at the city's secondary airport, Midway.

Delays and cancellations could affect travel across the country, especially since many passengers need to change planes in Chicago or are reliant on aircraft that pass through the major aviation hub.

Tony Roma's introduces its new menu

Considered the pioneer of Baby Back Ribs, Tony Roma's can be found all over the world. With nearly 200 restaurants in 32 countries, it has become a worldwide success. Tony Roma's is committed to serving the best ribs anywhere.

But the Tony Roma's story does not end with ribs. Crisp, fresh salads, mouth watering char-grilled steaks, and delicious, custom-topped seafood make up a menu that is sure to please.

Today, Tony Roma's



Aruba, General Manager Frank Kelly together with Chef Calvert Cillie, Giovvy Luidens and Restaurant Manager Garvey Raven and his complete staff wants to introduce some delicious new ap-

petizers, entrees and dessert in the menu.

Among the new favorites: Crispy Calamari rings, piled high and served with marinara and garlic aioli, and Red hot Buffalo wings

For entrees: Basil Pesto & Vegetable Linguini - Linguine tossed with fire-roasted vegetables, mushrooms, tomato pesto and Asiago cheese in a light butter sauce. Or Memphis Burger - a grilled pure-beef burger loaded with Cheddar cheese, bacon, red onion, pickles, our signature pulled pork and Memphis BBQ sauce.

For dessert: Key Lime



Tart - a creamy blend of key lime juice and sweetened condensed milk nestled in a golden pie crust. Topped with a dollop of whipped cream and a fresh lime.

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Arabs like Caribbean citizenship deals

BASSETTERRE, St Kitts and Nevis - St Kitts and Nevis, followed by Dominica and then Bulgaria, are the fastest emerging popular immigration destinations for residents of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), according to an expert in the field.

The UAE is an Arab country in the southeast of the Arabian Peninsula on the Persian Gulf and has the seventh largest oil reserve in the world.

"The increase is tremendous," online newspaper Emirates 24/7 quoted Pej Mohy-edddin an immigration consultant at Bayat Legal Services as saying.

According to the newspaper the benefits of becoming a resident of these countries are great: "There are good chances of obtaining citizenship, visa-free travel options to many countries and a fairly easy application process, with relatively little requirement from applicants," it said.

But according to the newspaper, the program is not for everyone; only for investors. "These programs are designed for high-net worth investors whose priority is not to migrate but get citizenship or second passports," Sohail Saleem, general manager of Premiers Consultancy in the UAE told Emirates 24/7.



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Group of loyal visitors honored at the Marriott Ocean Club



Recently, the Aruba Tourism Authority honored a big group of loyal visitors as *Distinguished Visitors* and *Ambassadors of Goodwill of Aruba*. The symbolic honorary title is presented in the name of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for 10 to 19 (*Distinguished Visitor*) and 20 or more (*Ambassador of Goodwill*) consecutive years. The honorees were Mr. Carl and Mrs. Mariam Eastman, Dr. Antoin and Mrs. Vera Chaker, Mr. Donato and Mrs. Joan Romagnoli, Mr. Steve and Mrs. Elaine Weiner, Mr. Herb and Mrs. Robyn Weiss, Mr. Larry and Mrs. Terri Eisenfeld, Mr. Paul and Mrs. Zelda Schwartz and Mr. Thomas and Mrs. Stephanie Lesiak. The certificates were presented to them by Mr. Ernest Giel representing the Aruba Tourism Authority together with Mrs. Gali Sahit and Mr. Corey Guest, GM at the Marriott Ocean Club.

The Netherlands reveals plans for new island in Wadden Sea

THE HAGUE -- The Dutch province Groningen and several environmental organizations brainstorm about plans for a new island in the Wadden Sea, newspaper Trouw reported Thursday.

An enormous sand bank of about 500 acres somewhere between the Dutch island Rotterdoo, the German island Borkum and the mainland would probably serve both ecological and economic needs, director of environmental organization Natuur en Milieu Federatie (NMG) Siegbert van der Velde told public broadcast company NOS.

The costs of the island's construction are roughly estimated at 1 billion euros.

The Eemshaven is the biggest seaport in the northern part of the Netherlands and wants to become one of the largest renewable energy ports of Europe. But the supply of

gas and coal is problematic because ships have little time to enter the port at high tide.

According to van der Velde, the northwest side of the island could consist of salt marshes and beach, while on the south side a complete port with a transshipment terminal could be constructed.

If the island would be built it could slow sea currents towards the Eems, the river that discharges into the Wadden Sea. These measures would diminish mud streams towards the river.

In addition, plans for a new port on the island would imply that sea tankers would be able to transship cargo to smaller tankers, which takes away the need to deepen the river's fairway. This allows sand banks to recover, while it saves the local government an annual dredging cost of 18 million euros.



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International news

WHO head warns diseases set to rise

HONG KONG (AFP) - The head of the World Health Organization warned Thursday that infectious diseases will spread more easily in the future due to globalisation, changing lifestyles and rising population densities.

"The future looks very bright for microbes, not so good for humanity," Margaret Chan told a luncheon in her hometown Hong Kong, the site of a major outbreak of the SARS virus in 2003 that killed almost 300 people in the city.

Higher population density, industrialisation of food production and the increase in international travel have provided many opportunities for communicable diseases to spread, she said.

But the WHO head said not all new diseases will be as "devastating" as the outbreak of SARS that killed more than 800 people worldwide and the

H1N1 epidemic that caused at least 17,000 deaths.

Chan said one reason that infectious diseases have been on the rise in the region and China was due to the habit of eating the meat of exotic animals, as most new diseases are spread from animals to humans.

"Constant mutation and adaptation are survival mechanisms of the microbial world, these organisms are well equipped to take advantage of every opportunity to jump the species barrier," she said.

The WHO issued a global alert in September for a SARS-like coronavirus which killed two people in Qatar, one in Saudi Arabia and two in Jordan.

The WHO says the coronavirus detected in the Middle East this year was unrelated to SARS and is a novel form of the germ.

Record vote against death penalty at UN

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) - A record 111 countries voted Thursday for a moratorium on capital punishment at a keynote UN General Assembly human rights meeting.

Although not legally binding, campaigners say the vote held every two years sends a strong signal to the slowly shrinking number of nations -- including China, Iran and the United States -- that still execute prisoners.

There were 111 votes in favor of a moratorium, four more than in 2010.

Among the 41 countries that voted against the moratorium were the United States, China, Japan, India, Iran, North Korea and Saudi Arabia. Thirty-four countries abstained.

European nations have pressed hard for votes backing a moratorium. But Norway's ambassador Geir Pedersen said the growing numbers backing

an end to capital punishment show "this is no longer dominated by western countries. This is a global campaign."

"The importance of the vote is that it sends a very strong message to the international community across the board," Pedersen told AFP. "The General Assembly is the one place where all nations are represented and you have a strong majority in favor of a moratorium."

About 150 countries now have a moratorium or an outright ban on capital punishment. Just 21 nations were reported to have carried out executions in 2011, according to rights groups.

But the rights groups said the countries that still carry out executions remain hardcore.

China executes thousands of prisoners a year, rights groups say, and Iran put to death more

than 650 people in 2011, making it the highest per capita executioner.

Some countries defended maintaining their capital punishment at a UN committee meeting last month where 110 countries voted for a moratorium. Japan said it had to keep the possibility of hanging prisoners because "heinous" crimes are still being committed.

Thursday's vote was held a day after UN Human Rights Commissioner Navi Pillay called on Iraq to move toward abolishing the death penalty.

Iraq executed 70 people in the first six months of this year, compared to 67 for the whole of 2011, and 18 in 2010, according to the UN mission in the country.

A world congress against the death penalty is to be held in Madrid in June.

Bolivia announces amnesty to ease jail overcrowding

LA PAZ- President Evo Morales announced Thursday he will propose pardons for some categories of inmates to ease conditions in Bolivia's horrendously overcrowded jails.

Bolivia has nearly 14,000 people behind bars, three times the capacity for which its prisons were built. Only El Salvador's are more overcrowded, according to a recent report by the Organization of American States.

Morales spoke a day after inmates at a prison in La Paz,

one of the most packed, staged a protest to demand better conditions.

Prisoners at five other facilities had staged similar protests, and said they would carry out more unless Morales acted before Christmas.

They are people under 25, women over age 55, men over 58 -- all of them have to have served at least a third of their sentences -- or people with serious or terminal diseases. Also on the list would be prisoners with children under age 12.

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International News

'Televisa' smugglers found guilty in Nicaragua

MANAGUA (AFP) - A Nicaragua court has found 18 Mexicans guilty of money laundering and drug trafficking after they crossed the border in trucks stuffed with \$9.2 million and bearing the Televisa broadcaster's logo.

In what's become known as the "Televisa case," the 18 crossed into the country in August in six trucks bearing the emblem of the world's largest Spanish-language network, which has denied any involvement.

In its ruling the court sided with prosecutors, who had ar-

gued that the defendants were part of an organized crime network that crisscrossed Central America disguised as journalists to smuggle money and drugs.

The prosecution said traces of cocaine were found in the vehicles.

The defendants insisted they were innocent, but were unable to prove they worked for the broadcaster. Televisa has denied any link to them and filed a lawsuit in Nicaragua accusing them of infringing on its logo.

Prosecutors have requested the maximum sentence for each offense, which would see the 18 convicted smugglers serve 30 years in prison. Sentencing is scheduled for January 18.

Mexico's powerful drug cartels have expanded their reach across Central America since 2006, when the Mexican government launched a major military crackdown that is seen as having been largely ineffective.

Lawmakers demand return of US soldier jailed in Mexico



Hammar was told by Mexican customs agents he was allowed to bring the gun, which he inherited from his grandfather, into the country as long as he registered it immediately with authorities.

The lawmakers write that Hammar, who has been treated for post-traumatic stress disorder after his deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, has faced beatings and other abuses from fel-

low prisoners.

"His parents immediately began receiving extortion calls from these inmates," the letter states, adding "the inmates even forced Jon to speak to his parents on the phone and tell them to pay the money or he would be killed."

His family has also accused Mexican prison authorities of repeatedly handcuffing Hammar to his bed, which Mexico denies.

WASHINGTON (AFP) - A group of 68 US lawmakers on Thursday demanded Mexico take all possible measures to ensure the safe return of a former US marine, jailed after crossing the border with an antique shotgun.

Jon Hammar, 27, a veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, was arrested after entering Mexico on his way to Costa Rico for a surfing vacation. In Mexico, shotguns are reserved for use by the armed forces.

The US lawmakers insisted Hammar's case "is of the utmost importance," alleging the former soldier has been mistreated in prison, according to the letter released by Republican congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.

According to the letter,



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Canada getting out of medical marijuana business



OTTAWA (AFP) - Canada's Conservative government will soon stop producing and distributing medical marijuana,

leaving it up to the private sector in a policy change that angered critics.

Canada's Health Minister

Leona Aglukkaq made the announcement this week, claiming current regulations "have left the system open to abuse."

Aglukkaq said Ottawa would no longer produce and distribute marijuana for medical purposes. Instead, companies will be licenced to grow and sell the product at market rates.

Patients with a prescription from a doctor starting in March 2013 will be allowed to purchase a variety of strains of

marijuana from licensed producers, who will set prices.

Also individuals will no longer be permitted to grow marijuana in their homes for their own personal use, said Aglukkaq.

Police and fire officials claimed that home grow operations are at "risk of abuse and exploitation by criminal elements" and one in 22 catch fire, and so they applauded the move.

Doctors however complained that they are being asked to write prescriptions for a substance that has not been clinically tested. Some risks such as lung disease from smoking it or psychosis are known, while the benefits are only anecdotal, including relief from nausea and pain.

And they said they are now being asked to be the sole gatekeepers of the program, accusing the government of

abdicating its responsibility.

Marijuana activists and opposition MPs meanwhile stepped up calls for both medical and recreational use of marijuana to be decriminalized, after two US states last month voted to legalize pot.

Some 26,000 Canadians are authorized to use marijuana for medical purposes, up from 500 a decade ago, according to government figures.

As many as one million Canadians are believed to smoke it regularly for recreation, say polls.

Canada's health department currently sells marijuana for Can\$5 per gram, which it says is heavily subsidized by taxpayers. The street value can be as many as three times more.

Some patients have said the government stash is weak and so turned to growing it themselves.

Our path to innovation continues in 2013 as well



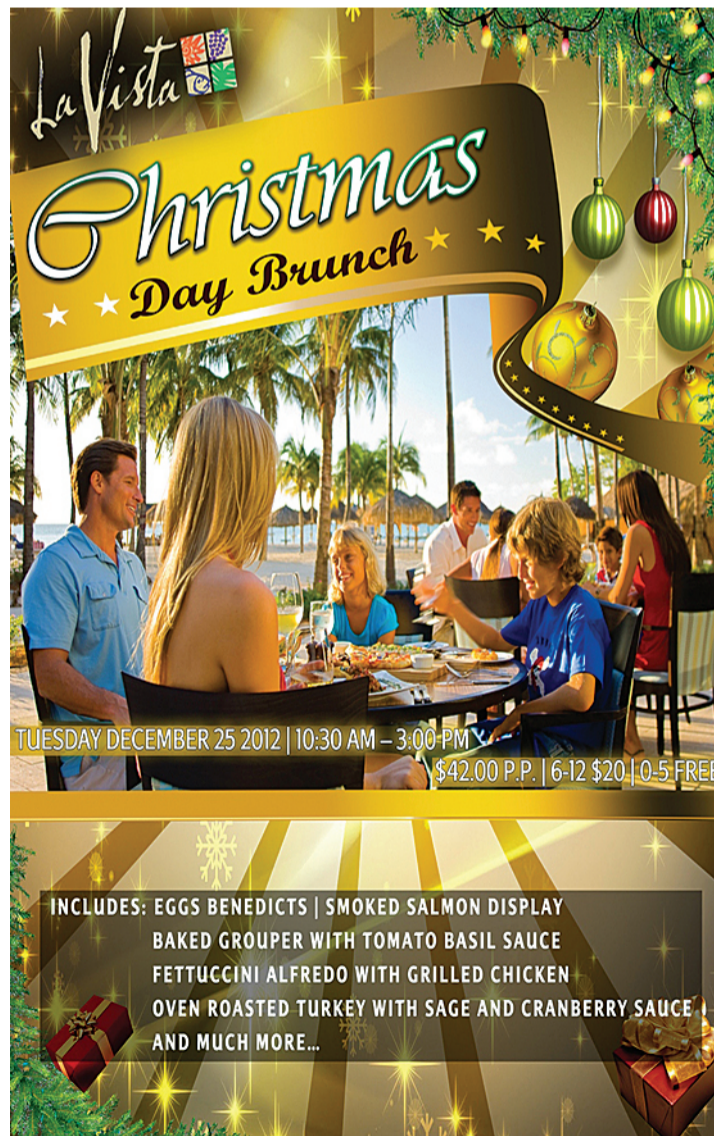
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Sci-Tech

**-- 'China is coal.
Coal is China.' --**



PARIS (AFP) The IEA, the energy advisory arm of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of 34 industrialised nations, sees non-OECD developing countries as driving the increase in coal consumption due to population growth and rising electricity consumption as their economies grow and modernise.

In its baseline scenario, the IEA sees rapid increases in power generation making India the second-largest coal consumer in 2017, displacing the United States where the shale gas boom makes coal uncompetitive.

Chinese coal consumption is forecast to account for more than half of global demand by 2014, with the country also displacing the United States as the biggest coal polluter on a per-capita basis.

The IEA sees China's coal demand increasing by an average of 3.7 percent per year to 3,190 million tonnes of coal equivalent in 2017.

Even in the case of a slow-down in the breakneck growth in the Chinese economy the IEA sees the country's use of coal growing by 2 percent per year, as well as the overall coal market growing.

The agency said that given

its position developments in the Chinese market would largely determine the course of the global coal market, saying: "China is coal. Coal is China."

The IEA believes that current mining and port expansion projects are sufficient to meet China's rising needs, but expressed concern if the current low prices and uncertainties about the economic outlook make investors overly cautious.

Cancellations or a slow-down in "...development projects might lead to tightened international coal markets" in the next five years, the IEA warned.

The report sees only the United States making reductions on coal-based carbon emissions on per capita and per economic output measures thanks to cheap gas displacing coal.

Increased coal use pushes up China's emissions on a per capita basis, displacing the United States as the top polluter.

However, China is also seen as making the most gains in emissions efficiency, followed by the United States.

Neither the Europe nor India are forecast to make considerable gains in emissions efficiency.

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'Apocalypse Noah': Dutch Christian readies escape Ark



THE HAGUE (AFP) - A Dutch Christian has painstakingly prepared a lifeboat in his garden capable of saving 50 people ahead of biblical floods he expects to accompany Friday's Mayan-foretold 'doomsday.'

"The Mayans weren't crazy, and if you also look at biblical prophecies, the mountains will melt like wax," Pieter Frank van der Meer told the left-wing Volkskrant daily on Thursday.

A fervent Christian, Van der Meer bought the orange totally enclosed lifeboat for 13,000 euros (around 17,000 dollars) and has installed a toilet, a sink, a child's car seat and food supplies.

Around 35 people have reserved seats in the Norwegian-built boat, which currently sits in Van der Meer's garden in the central Netherlands village of Kootwijkerbroek, around 20 kilometres (14 miles) from the sea.

Passengers include his children and grandchildren, Van der Meer told the Dutch Protestant television pro-

gramme "De Vijfde Dag" ("The Fifth Day").

Van der Meer's son, Pieter, has obtained a roughly one-metre cubed plastic container reinforced with metal bars for the family's two dogs, complete with hay and food inside.

"Here, they have a reasonable chance of survival," Van der Meer senior said.

The family's goats will unfortunately be left to their fate.

He said that the alignment of the Solar System's planets on December 21 will generate and release huge amounts of cosmic energy.

"This will activate the sun," he said. "It's difficult to say what exactly will happen with the sun, but you can expect an enormous solar flare," which could cause a tsunami or a second Flood.

Alternatively, there may be a huge earthquake, and so he has bought a second-hand army Jeep with which to drive at speed to a location in a field where he and his family can pitch tents.

Pope urges City traders to seek Bible inspiration

VATICAN CITY (AFP) - Pope Benedict XVI on Thursday urged Christian financial and political leaders to base their decisions on the Bible, taking the unusual step of writing an editorial for the Financial Times.

"It is in the Gospel that Christians find inspiration for their daily lives and their involvement in worldly affairs - be it in the Houses of Parliament or the Stock Exchange," the pope said in the

article, which was requested by the London-based newspaper and was distributed by the Vatican press office.

"Christians shouldn't shun the world, they should engage with it," he said.

He had a word of warning for the City, however, saying that Jesus Christ himself had cautioned against "the relentless pursuit of wealth".

The pope also hinted at two issues close to his heart: the need for more morality in the

world of finance and for laws that respect Christian ethics.

"When Christians refuse to bow down before the false gods proposed today, it is not because of an antiquated world-view," he wrote.

"Rather, it is because they are free from the constraints of ideology and inspired by such a noble vision of human destiny that they cannot collude with anything that undermines it," he said.

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Finance

Natural, man-made disasters in 2012 cost \$140bn: Swiss Re

ZURICH (AFP) - Natural and man-made disasters around the world this year, including Superstorm Sandy, will cost at least \$140 billion (106 billion euros), according to a study published by Swiss insurance group Swiss Re.

The insurance industry will cover about \$65 billion of all losses from such catastrophes, the study showed, ticking in above the average for the past 10 years.

It nevertheless marked a significant drop from 2011, when massive earthquakes and flooding forced insurers to dish out more than \$120 billion to cover disaster-related losses.

Natural catastrophes alone this year will lead to more than 11,000 deaths and \$60 billion in insured claims, Swiss Re said in a statement.

But after two years when natural disasters such as the devastating Haiti earthquake and Pakistan floods were

largely concentrated in Asia Pacific and South America, "2012 is dominated by large, weather-related losses in the US," it added.

The "top-five insured loss events" had all happened in the United States, it pointed out. They included Hurricane Sandy which wreaked havoc across the east coast of the country, as well as in the Caribbean and the Bahamas at the end of October.

"Estimates for the insured cost of the devastation are between \$20 and \$25 billion," it said, though "it is still too soon to gauge the final overall damage."

In addition, extremely dry weather conditions in the United States had led to "one of the worst droughts in recent decades, affecting more than half of the country," the study showed. Drought-related agricultural losses there were expected to well to \$11 billion, it added.

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New Brickell Bay Sand Beach lounge offers a refreshing change both day and night!



attracted island fashionistas as a relaxed, elegant place to while away the evening hours.

Sand Beach also provides a very interesting lunch menu in an ambiance that makes you feel as if you are still stretched

The holidays are upon us, which mean festive times for Aruba, but also busy beaches with crowded eateries and often very long waits just to sit down and get a bite to eat. Aruba's newest lounge, Brickell Bay Sand Beach, in Palm Beach, created quite a stir with its recent opening, revealing a chic, unique environment that has strongly

out on the beach, but with a distinctly more tranquil and appealing surroundings, particularly these end of the year days.

A very interesting and reasonable menu features lunch alternatives such as a 6 oz Rock Lobster Tail "Sandwich" on garlic toast with gourmet fries for only \$17, aside from favorite

lunch bar fare. If the frenetic crowds at the beach bars and the demands on the wait help are not quite providing that tranquil setting you are seeking from your Aruban sojourn, you just might want to check it out.

Lunch also includes use of their very appealing pool deck and they offer the latest craze, beach tennis. It is a very interesting alternative, away from the crowds, but still with the feeling of being on the beach or around the pool. It also has an arcade of interesting shops, a mini-market, and the best stocked hookah store on the island.

The new eatery/nightclub is still basically a night spot, and features several attractive specials, including a nightly 2-for-1 happy hours from 5:00 to 7:00 PM which includes frozen drinks and premium brands. There is great entertainment without a cover charge. This Sunday they will feature one of the island's most popular and dynamic entertainers of the last decade,



Marisela and the Aquarius Band, back on Aruba for a limited engagement. Marisela will be heating up Palm Beach for a very cool night at the Sandbar on Sunday, December 23 from 6:00 to 9:00 PM. This is a performer known for "bringing down the house," so don't

miss this rare opportunity to enjoy some great entertainment and discover Aruba's most stylish new nightspot. Brickell Bay Sand Beach lounge is located directly across the street from the South Beach Center. If you are wondering what is new and hip on Aruba, this is it!



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~Burton Hillis

5 Burgers Aruba: Now your best breakfast bargain!



--A favorite stop for a great burger for lunch or dinner has just expanded their hours and menu to offer some of the best breakfast bargains to be found in Palm Beach. Owners Aaron and Rosie Walisever are living their dream: a home on paradise while welcoming all and sundry to their proud undertaking, 5 Burgers Aruba. The couple's fanatical dedication to giving their customers what they really want has resulted in a unique menu from an inter-

nationally known franchise with a "5", which now includes breakfast.

"You never get a second chance to make a first impression," believes Aaron. Upon entering 5 Burgers Aruba in The Village Mall in Palm Beach, one is struck by utterly spotless surroundings and a smiling, friendly, attentive service crew. Of course, the main item on the menu is burgers-the way they were meant to be, thick and juicy,

made fresh daily and 100% pure beef, the kind that made the hamburger a traditional American treat.

However, beginning at 7 a.m., patrons can now order 2 eggs any style, (omelets with 3 fillings are \$7.99) toast and coffee with unlimited refills for the special introductory price of only \$4.49, (\$5.48, with bacon) or All-you-can-eat pancakes, for \$6.99, again, with free refills on fresh coffee. Breakfast is served until 11 a.m. Famous for their fries made from fresh potatoes, Aaron has been working for months on devising the most irresistible home fries recipe, chunky and tender with skins still on; after much testing and tasting, he got the thumbs up from his harshest critic, Rosie; so this is another treat you have to try.

A glance at their burger menu will certainly tempt you to return for lunch or dinner, to sample their famous specialty items such as the Gouda,



Farmer's or Man Burger (almost 12 ounces of choice beef), and a Western Burger with Aarons' secret-recipe crispy onion rings. All of these can be personalized with an incredible array of toppings, (mushrooms, jala-peño peppers, bacon, cheese, lettuce, tomato...whatever, the list goes on) at absolutely no extra cost.

5 Burger portions are ENORMOUS! Aaron suggests that even their small serving of

fries is enough to be shared by two. He was very amused to watch a famous French chef demonstrating the best way to make fried potatoes on a gourmet cooking show and could only comment "He stole my recipe!"

Try them the English way-with vinegar, and you'll wonder how you ever ate fries without it. This same 5-star chef also swears by Gouda as the best topping for the ideal gourmet cheeseburger.

5 Burgers is now open early until 10-ish at night; delivery is available to both the high-rise and low-rise hotel and beach district at now extra cost for orders over \$50. Enjoy a great lunch without ever leaving the beach by calling 586-3904. However, we suggest you stop by and enjoy their authentic, heartfelt hospitality; it is not unusual for either owner to sit and chat, sharing their knowledge of the island while making sure patrons are happy with their meal.

Gold Coast Aruba: This is the time to invest

-- Management of Gold Coast Aruba, the island's newest and most innovative gated community, reports that sales have been very good and encouraging as the global economy recovers and people looking to purchase vacation homes have found that Gold Coast is an outstanding investment value. Director of Sales, Fito Croes has noticed a surprising percentage of owners in reality do not spend a great amount of time personally to use the villas or town homes they purchase, but are taking advantage of Gold Coast's rental services to turn their investment into ready income.

"The greater portion of home owners are using their "home away from home" in Aruba to escape the winter months, or spend holidays with the family on the island," he remarked, "but I am gratified by how many are buying because they felt secure with real estate investment on Aruba. They really study the history and economy of the island and are impressed with the political stability and continually increasing value of prime locations. Gold Coast is in the heart of Malmok, considered Aruba's most exclusive community where the value of properties has only increased over time. It is only minutes to the best beaches and all the action, and yet offers a quiet and secluded getaway; we are very pleased by



the response to our concept."

Fito, with his sister Mayrin and brother Rudy operate Cas Bon, which has been constructing homes and building developments for all budgets for nearly twenty years. "Gold Coast Aruba is the jewel in our crown," observes Fito. "We were very excited about this project and the scope of actual and planned facilities and amenities. We have spoken to countless island visitors to find out what they would really want in a permanent residence on Aruba, and took from there."

Input from frequent vacationers who have dreamed of their own home in Aruba contributed to the realization of Gold Coast Aruba which when complete will be a community

of 260 town homes, villas and condominiums with a stunning clubhouse complemented by two additional community pool areas. The Clubhouse is about to start construction and will offer to the community homeowners and visitors 2 tennis courts, full service spa and fitness center as well as a stunning pool area and is expected to be complete by early 2013. It will also house a restaurant and mini-market.

Owners who purchased upon the groundbreaking only a few short years ago, are already enjoying a nearly 50% appreciation on their investment, particularly those taking advantage of the on site management's rental services program. There is always a great demand for Aruba and facili-

ties such as those at Gold Coast, make it easy for some owners to see a valuable return on their investment.

The design of the residences and public areas is open, airy and spacious, taking full advantage of the island environment, with quality construction and finishing available. Partnering with two of Aruba's top providers of kitchens and bathrooms enables developers to offer custom options allowing buyers to individualize their homes. An elegant and chic furniture package is available or island designers will assist owners in finishing the décor to their specific tastes.

There are many aspects to purchasing property; not the

least is the future value of the investment. To further enhance this, Gold Coast management have inaugurated a number of in-house services and have recently become affiliated Interval International, the world's largest network of vacation ownership properties which provides an unlimited international pool of investors to tap for ownership and rental prospects. Property exchange for a vacation in another destination is also available through the Interval International affiliation. Gold Coast's own rental services have also proven highly successful in assisting owners in renting their villas; 24-hour security and maintenance services also tip the scales when it is time to make a decision. Aside from all this, housekeeping, child care, catering services, car rental through its partnership with AVIS car rental are also available as well as pre-shopping services so cupboards and refrigerators are stocked upon arrival, which can also be arranged through their property management department. Personnel are also available to assist in arranging restaurant reservations and island activities.

Visit their website: www.goldcoastaruba.com for more details and availability or call 586-2200 to arrange a personal tour.

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NFL: Bengals, Colts, Seahawks will reach playoffs with wins



Wallace Gilberry's fumble return for a touchdown sealed the deal for the Bengals in the third quarter; the score put them up 24-13 winning the Eagles.

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The Cincinnati Bengals, Indianapolis Colts and Seattle Sea-

hawks will clinch National Football League playoff berths with triumphs Sunday while two last spots might not be settled until the last games.

The penultimate week of the gridiron campaign looms with New England, Denver and Houston having clinched division titles, and thus playoff berths, in the American Conference while Baltimore has sealed a post-season spot as well.

In the National Conference, Green Bay and Atlanta have secured divisional crowns and San Francisco has claimed a playoff berth, but three playoff spots remain up for grabs between a half-dozen contenders.

Indianapolis (9-5) would clinch an American Conference berth with a victory at Kansas City (2-12) and Cincinnati (8-6) would do the same by winning at Pittsburgh, where the Steelers (7-7) must win to sustain any playoff hopes.

A Cincinnati victory would also secure a playoff spot for 2012 top NFL Draft pick Andrew Luck's Colts even if they lose to the Chiefs, who share the NFL's worst record, and

best chance at 2013's top pick, with Jacksonville.

Seattle (9-5) would clinch a National Conference playoff spot with a victory at home over NFC West division rival San Francisco (10-3 with one drawn) and push the fight for the divisional title into the final week of the season.

"We're both great teams that want to win," said Seattle rookie quarterback Russell Wilson. "It's going to be a one of a kind (atmosphere). This is the best place to play in the NFL in terms of the energy."

The 49ers would clinch the division crown and secure a first-round playoff bye with a victory and a loss by Green Bay (10-4) to visiting Tennessee (5-9).

Atlanta (12-2) would claim a first-round bye with a victory Saturday at Detroit (4-10) and would seize the home-field edge in the National Conference playoffs if Green Bay and San Francisco both lose.

The other two vacant playoff spots are for the NFC East champion -- a fight between the Dallas Cowboys, Washington Redskins and reigning Super Bowl champion New York Giants -- and an NFC wild-card team, which feature those three teams plus Chicago and Minnesota. All of them have 8-6 records.

The Redskins would clinch a playoff spot, but not the division crown, with a victory at Philadelphia (4-10) and losses by the Giants at Baltimore (9-5), Minnesota at Houston (12-2) and Chicago at Arizona (5-9).

The Giants would take a playoff spot with losses by Washington, Minnesota, Chicago and Dallas, which plays host to New Orleans (6-8).

If Baltimore wins or Cincinnati loses, the Ravens



Carolina Panthers fullback Mike Tolbert goes airborne to score a touchdown against the San Diego Chargers.

will clinch the AFC North crown and give the AFC repeat champions in all four divisions, an unprecedented feat since the four-division format was adopted a decade ago.

Other games Sunday find New England at Jacksonville, Oakland at Carolina, Buffalo at Miami, San Diego at the New York Jets, St. Louis at Tampa Bay and Cleveland at Denver.

Minnesota running back Adrian Peterson is 293 yards shy of Eric Dickerson's one-

season NFL rushing record of 2,105 yards, set in 1984 when he was with the then-Los Angeles Rams, with games remaining against the Texans and Green Bay.

Detroit receiver Calvin Johnson, leading the NFL with 1,667 reception yards, is threatening Jerry Rice's one-season reception yardage record of 1,848 set in 1995 with the 49ers. The Lions face Atlanta and Chicago in the next two weeks.

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Dutch professional footballer to offer clinic in Aruba



-- Youngsters between 10 to 12 years of age will be treated a one day football clinic from Dutch professional football star, Demy de Zeeuw. He is

expected on Aruba during the last week of the year. De Zeeuw is currently playing for Spartak Moscow and is in the Dutch selection since 2007. De Zeeuw has graciously offered to do a football clinic here for children 10 to 12 years at the Jara Stadium in Savaneta. The clinic is scheduled for Sunday, December 30th from 9:00 in the morning to 1:00 in the afternoon.

The 29 year old de Zeeuw has been described as a great 'tackle' and is very congenial when passing balls. He began his career at GO Ahead Eagles in 2001. In 2005 he changed clubs and played for AZ. From 2009 to 2011 he played for AFC AJAX and since 2011 he is with Spartak Moscow. Since 2007 de Zeeuw has been playing for the Dutch selection and has 27 interland games to his name.

Those interested in participating in this interesting clinic should contact David Abdul at telephone 592-5235. You can also contact David at d.abdul@arubagovernment.aw. This is a great opportunity for our young footballers to receive free classes from one of Holland's great players. Register right away to secure your spot to participate.



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